

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 SAB-01 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

SAM-01 /074 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7384

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4257

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, IS, US, EG

SUBJ: ISRAELI PARLIAMENTARIANS AND COMMENTATORS ON
INTERIM AGREEMENT

SUMMARY: ISRAELI PARLIAMENTARIANS, IMMERSED IN
INTENSIVE ROUNDS OF PARTY CONSULTATIONS IN PREPARATION
FOR JULY 6 CABINET MEETING, HAVE TOLD US: A) MAJORITY
OF LABOR ALIGNMENT MEMBERS, BOTH IN CABINET AND
KNESSET, SINCERELY WANT INTERIM AGREEMENT AND BELIEVE
GOI SHOULD OFFER ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO
HELP ACHIEVE IT, PRIMARILY TO PRESERVE CLOSE US-
ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP; B) RABIN IS HOLDING FIRMLY TO
POSITION THAT ISRAEL MUST RETAIN SOME ELEMENT OF
CONTROL IN EASTERN PART OF PASSES AND C) RAFI-NRP
HARDLINERS MAY TRY TO BLOCK AGREEMENT, BUT OPINION
IS DIVIDED AS TO WHETHER THEY COULD SUCCEED. THERE
IS STRONG CONSENSUS THAT MANNER IN WHICH US HANDLES
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NEGOTIATIONS AND PARTICULARLY ITS APPROACH TO
RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL COULD HAVE DETERMINING
INFLUENCE ON OUTCOME OF INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS. A
REASSURING US GESTURE SUCH AS PRESIDENT'S JUNE 30 WASHINGTON POST

INTERVIEW, IT IS BELIEVED, COULD STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THOSE MODERATES WHO ALREADY ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO GETTING AGREEMENT AND ALSO COULD CONVINCE THE FENCESITTERS. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AND COMMENTATORS IN RECENT DAYS AS TO EVOLUTION OF VIEWS IN CABINET AND KNESSET ON GOI STAND RE INTERIM AGREEMENT. IT IS CLEAR THAT POSITIONS ARE NOT YET FULLY CRYSTALLIZED, PENDING RETURN OF AMBASSADOR DINITZ FROM WASHINGTON WHICH WILL SET IN MOTION NEW ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS PRECEDING JULY 6 CABINET MEETING. IN ADDITION, CABINET WILL BE RECEIVING REPORT FROM IDF ASSESSING MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF FURTHER CONCESSIONS ON GROUND. INFORMED MILITARY COMMENTATOR ESTIMATES THAT SENIOR IDF COMMAND PROBABLY WILL GIVE GOI GREEN LIGHT BY INDICATING THAT ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS CAN BE MADE WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING ARMY'S CAPABILITY TO DEFEND ISRAEL.

2. THIS WEEK'S PARTY CONSULTATIONS HAVE SET STAGE FOR VOTE IN PARTY FORUMS AT LATER DATE ON HARD CHOICE: WHETHER TO OFFER ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO ATTAIN INTERIM AGREEMENT, EVEN IF IT IS FAR FROM IDEAL FROM ISRAELI VIEWPOINT, FOR SAKE OF PRESERVING US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP, OR TO HOLD FIRM AT RISK OF DEEPENING RIFT WITH USG AND LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY MOVE TO GENEVA. DECISION ULTIMATELY WILL BE RESULT OF INTERPLAY OF INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE MILITARY/DIPLOMATIC SITUATION.

3. PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT US HANDLING OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND PARTICULARLY APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL, COULD BE CRUCIAL ELEMENT IN OUTCOME OF CURRENT INTERNAL DELIBERATIONS. THEY HAVE TOLD US THAT PRESENTATION OF ISSUES IN ULTIMATIVE FORM COULD ONLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. ACCORDING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ONE JOURNALIST WHO WAS PRESENT AT ALIGNMENT FACTION MEETING JULY 1, RABIN HAD INDICATED THAT WHAT DISTURBED HIM MOST IN RECENT DAYS WAS MANNER IN WHICH US POSITION HAD BEEN PRESENTED TO ISRAEL. A LABOR MK WHO IS A FIRM PROPONENT OF REACHING AN INTERIM AGREEMENT SAID THAT US PROBABLY COULD SWING THE BALANCE HERE IF ISRAEL WERE REASSURED THAT ITS ACHIEVEMENT WOULD PUT END TO PERIOD OF TENSION IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP.

4. PARLIAMENTARIANS (WHO ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS) BELIEVE THAT IT REMAINS ESSENTIAL FOR EGYPT TO ALLOW ISRAEL TO KEEP SOME CONTROL

OVER EASTERN APPROACHES TO PASSES AS WELL AS WARNING STATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT EVEN MODERATES FAVORING ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS AT THIS STAGE DO NOT SPEAK OF TOTAL EVACUATION OF PASSES BUT RATHER OF LIMITING ISRAELI PRESENCE TO THEIR APPROACHES. AS HAARETZ COMMENTATOR PUT IT TWO DAYS AGO, THE "DOVES" WHILE PRESSING RABIN TO SHOW FLEXIBILITY HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT MORE SECURITY MINDED AS THE MOMENT OF DECISION DRAWS NEAR.

5. AS REGARDS CABINET LINEUP, COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT MAJORITY LED BY ALLON FAVOR DECISION BY GOI AT JULY 6 MEETING TO PROPOSE ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS. MINORITY OF HARDLINERS, PARTICULARLY PERES, YAACOBI AND HILLEL ARE EITHER UNDECIDED OR AGAINST. KEY OF COURSE RESTS WITH PRIME MINISTER, WITH UNANSWERED QUESTION BEING WHICH OF THESE TWO CAMPS HE WILL JOIN. AT THIS POINT IT IS BELIEVED THAT RABIN PROBABLY IS INCLINED TO CONSIDER OFFERING SOME FURTHER CONCESSIONS, BUT IS HOLDING FIRM ON RETENTION OF SOME CONTROL IN EASTERN PART OF PASSES. HE IS ALSO LOOKING FOR ASSURANCES RE DURATION AND COMPENSATORY US COMMITMENTS. WHETHER HE WOULD CONSIDER GOING BEYOND THIS AS NEGOTIATING PROCESS CONTINUES IS REGARDED AS HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC.

6. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT AFTER FURTHER EXCHANGE OF CLARIFICATIONS, RABIN WOULD PRESENT PROPOSED TERMS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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AGREEMENT TO LABOR ALIGNMENT FORUM AND/OR TO LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE BEFORE FINAL CABINET DECISION IS TAKEN. VIEWS ARE DIVIDED AS TO WHETHER RAFI HARDLINERS, IN AND OUT OF CABINET AT THAT POINT MIGHT TRY TO BLOCK AGREEMENT. ONE VIEW IS THAT, IF RABIN GETS WHAT HE REGARDS AS VIABLE PACKAGE, LABOR ALIGNMENT MAJORITY WOULD SUPPORT AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD THEN CARRY IN CABINET REGARDLESS OF RAFI POSITION. ANOTHER VIEW, HOWEVER, HOLDS THAT PERES AND YAACOBI, OR PERHAPS ONLY THE LATTE, WOULD HOLD FIRM EVEN TO POINT OF RESIGNATION. THEIR OPPOSITION COULD THEN STIMULATE DEFECTIONS IN RAFI/NRP RANKS IN SUBSEQUENT KNESSET VOTE, JEOPARDIZING APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT.

7. POSITION OF PERES IS REGARDED AS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT. ELEMENTS OF PERSONAL TENSION IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH RABIN (EXACERBATED BY SHARON APPOINTMENT) AND HIS RESPONSIBILITIES BOTH AS DEFENSE MINISTER AND AS HEAD OF RAFI HARDLINERS HAVE PUT HIM UNDER CONSIDERABLE STRAIN. DAYAN HAS DEEPENED HIS DILEMMA (LOYALTY TO RAFI OR TO THE

GOVERNMENT) BY INSISTING RECENTLY ON EGYPTIAN NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION AS CONDITION FOR HIS ASSENT TO INTERIM AGREEMENT. ON OTHER RECENT OCCASIONS, HOWEVER, DAYAN HAS EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF NEW AGREEMENT FOR PRESERVING US/ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP. SOME BELIEVE THAT THIS AMBIVALENCE IS INTENTIONAL, IN LARGE PART TO PUT PRESSURE ON PERES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEGISLATORS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PEACE TALKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV04257
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750231-0264
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197507103/baaaaevi.tel
Line Count: 173
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <07 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, IS, US, EG
To: STATE INFO AMMAN
BEIRUT
CAIRO
DAMASCUS
COPENHAGEN
JERUSALEM

Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006